

**Interview with Ernestine and Joseph Heastie
conducted by Linda Byrne for the
Providence District History Project Providence Perspective**

May 14, 2008

Linda: Today is May 14th and I am sitting here in the home of Ernestine and Joe Heastie in Vienna I am Linda Byrne and the purpose of this interview is for the Providence District History Project. Good morning and thank you for having me in your home and if we could start with where you were born and a little about your life, and can we please start with Ernestine.

Ernestine: I was born in Washington, D.C., but it was during the war and my father was in England and as soon as I was born, my family was from Florida, my mother left Washington and went home to Florida to be with the family until my father came back from the war. After that we moved around a while because my father went back into the military for the Korean War so we moved around at that point. Once he got out of the service we lived in New York so I went to elementary and high school in New York City and then I came to Washington to go to Howard University. At that point I met Joseph Heastie. Actually I met Joseph my fourth day at Howard University as a freshman. We got married and lived in D.C., for a while before moving to Virginia. I got a Bachelor's in Sociology and my Master's was in Early Childhood so I taught in Headstart, first in the regular Headstart and then I taught in D.C., Public Schools and once we moved to Virginia I was appointed to the Child Care Advisory Council so I was teaching in D.C., during the day at Headstart and volunteering in the evening in Fairfax County.

Linda: What years would that have been?

Ernestine: Well we moved to Virginia in 1974 and we got married actually in 1963 while I was still in college and moved to Virginia in 1974 and taught up until 1995 and got active I guess appointed somewhere around 1986. I joined the Providence Democratic Committee somewhere in 1982 and after that I became very involved in the Democratic Committee and once Kate Handley knew I had a degree in Early Childhood she appointed me to the

Child Care Advisory Council and I served on that until I ran for the School Board and was elected.

Linda: Let's move over to Joe and tell us about yourself.

Joe: I was born in Miami, Florida and I came to Washington, D.C., to go to college at Howard University like Ernestine said where we met. At some point and time after a few years at Howard, I dropped out and later on I went back to school at the University of Maryland and so I have my undergraduate degree at the University of Maryland and looking around for a graduate program once graduated, I discovered George Mason University which is not too far from where we are now so I got into the Master's Degree of Public Administration Program at George Mason and I finished that in 1984. We moved into this house here in 1980. Both of our children, Joseph and Eleanor were both born in Washington, D.C. We moved them both to the public school systems out here because we had heard that the public school systems here were excellent. The school systems in the District were starting to go down a little bit.

I worked out in Virginia also at the Army Systems Command on Rt. 50 in Falls Church at what they call the Melpar Building and the Computer Systems Command had the Annex and E Systems, a private engineering company had the rest of the Melpar Building. I worked there for about eight years. Eventually I ended up at Walter Reed Army Medical Center for a couple of years. I was Chief of Software Systems there and I spent almost all of my 31 years in the Federal Government in some kind of technology based, computer based field. After I left Walter Reed I went to the Army Military Personnel Center at the Hoffman Building in Alexandria. The Army rented part of the Hoffman Building in Alexandria also and I stayed there for about eight years. I finished up the last five years of my Federal employment going into D.C., working for the General Administration Services down at 18th and E Streets. At some point in time from about 1986 to 1994 I was appointed, first by Governor Gerald Baliles to the Board of Visitors at George Mason University and reappointed for a second term by Governor Wilder and in my second term I became the Vice Rector and the last year Rector at the Board of Visitors at George Mason. As alum I also served on the Alumni Association Board and later on I actually became

President of the Alumni Association at George Mason University. After I got off the Board of Visitors I was asked by President Johnson of the University to start a new group at George Mason of business people and we called it the Minority Advisory Board and we changed it to the Diversity Advisory Board and our purpose was to try to raise scholarship money and career related jobs for minority students. At one point and time we actually had about 70 businesses', mostly minority owned businesses working on that project so that kind of brings it forth to where I am right now. I am mostly retired and enjoying my grandchildren.

Linda: How many grandchildren, tell me about them.

Joe: We have a grandson and in Drexel Hill, PA just outside of Philadelphia and his name is John Joseph and he is almost three, actually almost 2 ½ and a granddaughter Summer and she is in Florida. Now they are making plans and seriously considering moving back to this area as early as this summer but right now they are in the Clearwater, Newport Ritchie area of Florida and Summer will be two in June so we are having a good time going back and forth and talking to them on the telephone and babysitting a lot. I have changed way more diapers now than I did with my kids, probably more with my grandkids all the time than I ever did with my own kids.

Ernestine: We actually have to travel to baby-sit, when Summer was ill we traveled to Florida because we knew she was going to be out of school for at least a week, out of the day care so to keep my daughter from using up her leave I went down and babysat with her for a while with my grandson and now we have finally gotten to a point where my one in Philadelphia comes here, so we baby sit here. I also have some friends who are grandmothers and as you can see I have the grandmother's high chair. We loan each other furniture. I have the grandmother crib upstairs and my girlfriend's grandchildren have now outgrown it so she passed it on to me and when my grandkids outgrow them I will pass it on to someone else, so we have kind of kept that going.

Linda: That is a great idea. Speaking of Florida, your Mother has done some incredible things down there could you tell us a little about that?

Ernestine: My mother, as I said my father being in the military we traveled around, Germany, the State of Washington, and all over the Country. Once they settled in when I was in high school my mother went back to school. She had some college but hadn't finished so she went back to school while I was in high school and became a Practical Nurse and she spent years in visiting nursing in New York. Then when my father retired and they went to Florida my mother went back to school and became a Registered Nurse and received her Bachelor's Degree and her Master's Degree and they also moved back to the old neighborhood which was a typical black neighborhood and my mother found that her neighbors for whatever reason were not comfortable going to local hospital and so she would be at home at night and checking their blood pressure, and diabetes and apparently at one point had a neighbor actually die on the way to the hospital. Then my mother decided they had to have a health center in the community and she spent years getting support, including every doctor she knew she asked them to volunteer their services and they did. Eventually with the help of the State of Florida they gave her money to build a health center with the understanding that if she could keep it going for five years they would then own the building and land. If she couldn't keep it going then that land would go back to the City of Clearwater and my mother kept it going from something like 1996 and the building came in 2000. It is still going and it is a constant battle to raise money and the center is free but you have to make an appointment but the services are free. It is open three days a week and the doctors are there to give their time, so the doctors are free. There are a couple of people there who are paid but anyone who comes in and it is not these days many of the people obviously are new immigrants because you hear accents but you also have people who don't have health insurance. That is the only rule. Doctors cannot see anyone with health insurance; if you don't have health insurance then you are welcome to come. When I go to Florida I volunteer in the clinic. People call and say my daughter's school called and said she needs shots and we don't have any money and they said you are free and then it is just a matter of making an appointment when the doctor will be there or a pediatrician will be there so they can get those baby shots. You hear so much of that and as I said it is an ongoing battle. The center was first named after the neighborhood, The Greenwood Community Health Resource Center and

right before my mother died they named it after her so there is now a Willa Carson Health Resource Center and we have been working hard to keep it open.

Joe: She received a lot of awards and recognition for her community service. Governor Jeb Bush gave her a Florida Points of Light award based on what his father gave for volunteers when he was President, in Tallahassee and she received a beautiful award and there was a ceremony and then unfortunately she never saw it but right before she died she found out she received from President George Herbert Walker Bush a National Points of Light and that is how she kept the program going.

Ernestine: March 30th was when she got the National Points of Light for her volunteer services. She is also in the Florida's Nurses Hall of Fame for the work she did because the last years of her life she had been volunteering.

Joe: She was a hometown hero in Clearwater given by the local news media. She got a lot of recognition because I believe she got her Master's Degree when she was 57 years old.

Ernestine: I think she was older than that she was in her sixties.

Joe: She was in the Delta Sigma Sorority when she was 57 and she just worked all the way until the day she died and was continuously doing something.

Linda: How old was she when she died?

Joe: That is controversial.

Ernestine: She was about 80 and it is sensitive but she was still a licensed Nurse because every year she would go to conferences where she could renew her skills so when she died she still had her license as a Nurse.

Joe: She had a Master's Degree in Nursing and she taught Nursing at the

Community College and at the regular college in St. Petersburg.

Linda: Wonderful. Joe you were talking about your career in technology. What kind of changes have you seen over the years?

Joe: Oh my goodness, I guess everybody is pretty much familiar with the rapid change in data processing and most of my career I spent in one type of data processing organization or another. I was there right in the very heyday of the large frame computer systems, the big IBM systems and the big Sperry systems and I saw the transition slowly to the smaller yet more powerful systems coming in. So I saw all of those changes over the years and it seemed like the changes were coming every year and the computers were coming three times as fast and having 10 times the capacity and it continued to happen so there was a constant need to continually upgrade your training and education which I did all along for myself. I also ran a really big government wide training program, actually it was mostly Defense Department training program called the Information Center. We were right there at the beginning of the PC's when they began coming into the Federal Government and at the very beginning of the Internet before it was even available to the general public the Defense Department had the big Internet system.

Linda: What years would that have been approximately?

Joe: This would have been in the very early 1980's. The small PC's had very small capacities, very slow but we were still able to get on them through the Defense Department's communication system, I think it was called Dod something I forgot what the Defense Department called the birth of the Internet. But, we could communicate with Army Bases and military installations all over the world. Now, oh my goodness in just the years since I retired in 1994 and to see what has happened since then and I am sitting over here on a laptop that has probably 10 times more storage than I had on the main frame that I was using When I retired. There are really

amazing changes. Of course I haven't kept up with it because I just use it for personal use now.

Linda: You mentioned that you moved from Washington to Virginia and the schools, and Ernestine what kind of changes actually both of you could talk about this, but Ernestine having been on the school board what kind of changes have you seen in Fairfax County School's over the years?

Ernestine: I will say when we first moved here in the 1970's and I actually first moved to Fairfax City and then later on in 1977 moved to Providence and the school that my daughter went to at that time she was primarily in a class with white students, both of my children being one or two but very few minorities. Mostly at that time the minorities were black. In the late 1970's the Vietnamese community began to come in and I guess that was at the end of the war, in large numbers. Then one of my children's friends and one of the things I remember her talking about was food, she could not get over what looked like green spaghetti and so when she would go to her friend's house she would talk about food. I remember when we moved to Providence and I think Eleanor was in about the third grade her having a birthday party and just thought it was so wonderful because there were students there from all around the world and I thought what a great way for her to grow up. I was very sensitive that there was a young Jewish lady and there was also a Muslim student and I thought how wonderful it was. Of course it was all girls but the fact that these girls were Spanish, Jewish, Muslim, as well as Eastern Europe so many different parts of the world and I guess that is the biggest difference I had seen in the school system. It was the diversity has grown and grown and grown and so now we have all of those languages. At what point I think the first thing I saw was the Vietnamese and then we began to see Spanish and plus what is fascinating to me is when I grew up in New York we had Puerto Ricans, they were Spanish but all from Puerto Rico and one of the things about Fairfax is that you find out very quickly they might be from El Salvador, Mexico a few from Puerto Rico or they might be from Spain so you just can't say Spanish. We have true diversity in Fairfax, they can be from everywhere and I think that is wonderful.

The other thing I know in terms of the school is that once I got on the school board the technology at one point many of the schools became desperate and this was in 1996, to get computers for their schools so we found that some of our schools had PTA's that were wealthy enough to do fund raisers and raise money to buy computers to put into their schools.

Then of course we had many schools where their parents just could not afford to do that so one of the very big issues was how do we get computers into all the schools? So the school system began to have programs so kind of in an orderly way you began to see to it and find out which schools had them and which schools needed them and I remember one of the things that Bob Fries said is "hey we need an inventory". So the board encouraged the school system staff to find out before we knew the needs of the school we needed to know what they had or which schools had computers and which ones didn't. So we did an inventory of all the schools and at that point then we began to have programs and said okay the elementary schools will come in with this. There was some competition because we heard sometimes from the high schools that they were getting ready to go out in the work world so they needed the computers faster than the elementary kids needed the computers. So there were some issues that developed over that. But the other thing is that after a few years we felt like hey we finally got the computers in the schools and then you go after the schools and they say wait a minute, now we have to get them fixed and now you have to get us training and one of the things we learned about very quickly about computers is that they wear out, or go out of date very quickly. So the school system I think now does more leasing rather than the buying of the computer. But I felt like wait a minute we just got them in but we have to have training in order to use them.

I remember one time one of the Superintendents saying that he was in a school for a meeting and he saw a teacher working with a student and it was like 4:30 or something and he went over and said to the teacher how impressed he was that she was working so hard and the teacher said "he is helping me", she wasn't helping the student but the student was helping her how to understand how to deal with the computer. I remember thinking how wonderful that our children are growing up at the very

beginning with computer skills and therefore will be very comfortable with the technology of today. In my case my children did a lot of teaching me and they are still much more comfortable than I am. You see teachers coming out of college now and we don't really have to train those teachers the technology because they have been using computers and they have all those skills. But the other thing that is wonderful is that how comfortable the children are so one of the things that I have seen since I have been on the board is from having a few computers in the school to where having every classroom has computers and you don't have to go to a computer lab.

Of course we then went to the moveable labs, where the computers were on carts so that you could take that cart of computers and take them into a classroom. But I have seen the technology the school system has offered which is just fantastic. I guess the other thing is Fairfax County is one of the schools that has one of the largest emergence classes because we have emergence in Spanish and French so there is so much that is being offered to our children.

Linda: Explain exactly what the Emergence School is.

Ernestine: What the Emergence School is that the student went from the time, I believe it starts at first grade I am not sure if it starts at Kindergarten, and parents from around the community can apply to a school to say they want their child in it and what happens is with the emergence there are some besides just the language or science, math which are all taught in that particular language so the kids get much more practice using the language because they are using it every day. I have to say in Providence we don't have any Emergence Schools it was not something our parents ever asked for, so I have to say I am not as familiar with them because I have kind of gone out of our district. Now there are a few kids from our district that have applied for it but we don't actually have any schools that offer it. I always thought it was a great idea but I was comfortable with our neighborhood schools in that parents were interested in gifted and talented centers and we do have Mantua and as well as Mosby Woods has that so they were interested in having that kind of thing in their neighborhood. There were some other programs and I am sorry

but my being retired since 2003 I am not as up to date but Fairfax County Public Schools does offer outstanding programs in their schools and the good thing is that we are paying attention to see how successful it is. Does that program actually work and is it making a difference.

When I came in one of the concerns was accountability and I believe our school system has done a better job saying of yes this is working because of student achievement and we can see the kids are benefiting from it. I think it is very important that that happened because the other thing too is the Standard of Learning test and when I came in we didn't have those so that again was a very big thing with accountability saying we want to make sure that the public schools are offering our children a good education.

There were some concerns and I was concerned because I didn't want to increase the number because we have a low drop out rate and I was concerned that I didn't want high school students that would find the test to challenging and drop out of school. So, we did bring in some programs to make sure that when they got to high school they were prepared and could take the test and then graduate so I think we are all pleased. It is an ongoing battle and there is a challenge and some logic is saying by passing these tests that proves that you know the subject that you really have learned the material. It has been kind of, for instance With No Child Left Behind I can remember when I wanted the Federal Government to get involved then I thought that would mean more money but unfortunately the Federal Government comes in with rules and do not come in with money so the money has not been enough to pay for what the rules make you do. I was disappointed in that and thought - see that is why people say you have to watch the Federal Government because No Child Left Behind sounds wonderful but then we begin to hear when we have these large number of students for whom English is a second language that they must be tested in English and originally they said when a kid walks in the door and of course kids are coming in all year round, so that kid walks in the door and the next day is a test and they were demanding that kid must take the test. If that child was from Russia or wherever and you are like wait a minute, he is from Russia and there is no way he can pass the test but they have to take it. One thing Virginia did it with the help of Fairfax County is for the State of Virginia to say it is going to take a few years before this

student has mastered enough English to fairly be tested on math, science or whatever in English. So the State of Virginia gave us time before the test or the student to take the test or the test to be taken or counted in determining the success of that school. But not the Federal Government, they were still demanding boy you will test him and that test would count. So you found that some of the things they did were very upsetting.

Another thing too is that if a school was having trouble meeting adequate yearly progress or demonstrating it the Federal Government immediately said if that school is not doing well then parents could choose to leave that school and go somewhere else.

Another thing they were demanding is the school system would have to pay if that parent wanted to send their child to private school or wherever that parent wanted to send that child. So if you are trying to improve the local public schools how was that helping? It seems like you would give it time and say well what are you trying, you have to make some changes but I felt the Federal Government was too quick to say that doesn't work, send them and let them go and of course when you say that the parents who leave are all the parents of kids who were successful and the parents who stay are unfortunately they are the parents who are working two jobs or whatever and their children are struggling so there are some concerns that I have about No Child Left Behind that was the benefits that come with a lot of problems. And that is what I have seen over the last few years.

Linda: Yes it has been a very controversial program. Could you tell me about the Fairfax County School Board, the structure of it and actually how it works?

Ernestine: Okay, the school board is a 12-member board. I ran in 1995 it was interesting to me at that time, I am not sure if there were 12 members but I know there were a couple of At Large members as well as each District had a school board member.

Linda: So there are nine districts so there would have been nine plus three.

Ernestine: Yes and when we ran I believe it was almost like to be following the Board of Supervisors but we weren't exactly the same because the Board of Supervisors has nine districts and nine supervisors but they only have one the Chairman that is an At Large Member and I believe it was because originally the existing School Board had three At Large members and I believe one was Black, one Asian and one Hispanic and when we went to the elected school board we kept the three and there were some concerns that we would lose all the minorities but when we ran and I have forgotten but I think it was something like 40 something people, a large number of people ran for that first school board. With that running we still elected two Blacks and an Asian so we did elect minorities.

At that time the first board had eight members that were endorsed by the Democratic Party and four members that were endorsed by the Republican Party. It was a challenge and we had some battles back and forth over it, exactly what our rolls were and how it would fit together. I believe there were some changes but I believe at that time the way it was set up, once a week the Superintendent would meet with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the school board and there would be discussions about any challenges that were coming up as well as any concerns. In addition to that weekly meeting usually in the morning the Superintendent might bring in some of his leadership team members because the Superintendent has a cabinet and they are called his Leadership Team. So, he might chose to bring them as well as the Chair and Vice Chair and then school board members would usually get a message telling them what was discussed and we would also have evening meetings on the school board and they were usually every other Thursday Evening I believe. We also had a number of work sessions. The first year I was on the board we had work sessions constantly, almost pretty much every day because we were a brand new board and the Superintendent and the school staff were trying to explain a lot of stuff to us about the school systems. I think at that time we had over 145,000 students and now there are over 165,000 so we had a lot to learn about whether we would hear reports about the facilities because there was someone who dealt with facilities and then of course we would hear about instruction and then Human Resources.

One of the issues we dealt with which I thought was very good we came up with is when we had employees that had a disease for instance like cancer, there were tremendous struggles trying to borrow leave from other folks, etc., and we came up with and changed it so we had a long term leave program so if someone was ill they could actually take off. We set it up so they did not have to borrow leave. I have forgotten how long you had to be here to get it but that was something we brought in so if you did get cancer or whatever you didn't have to worry and you could keep your job and you would still be getting paid. So we brought in some programs like that for our employees.

I am trying to think of what else we did but that was one of the things that I found very interesting and I guess I compared it to D.C., which needless to say has all kinds of problems. I found that when I would take my child to school when I was in D.C., I would have to go to the library to borrow some of the equipment and I found that in Fairfax County it is like every room had that equipment or maybe a teacher might share and so I was so overwhelmed by how much more equipment Fairfax County had for its children than D.C., than had. I remember there was something like my daughter was studying mealworms or something and it just blew my mind that the school system just didn't offer the books but it also even provided the mealworms whereas in D.C., we were kind of saying okay these are the skills we want you to teach and you as a teacher had to find the resources so that you could teach those objects so I was very impressed with what Fairfax County was offering.

As a school board member we worked very hard because it seemed like there was always more that the schools needed and we tried to provide of course getting more always meant having to go to Fairfax County because the State never provided and adequate amount of money particularly for schools in the county where the view was that if you have enough money and you can take care of yourself. So it was an ongoing battle because the county had other needs and we could see as a school system what more we could be able to do for the students if we had more money.

Linda: Very interesting and of course we have one of the best school systems in the United States. Let's move back to traffic and commuting.

What kinds of things and changes have you seen over the years?

Joe: The biggest change of course for us in our community was at one point in time we decided that it just didn't make any kind of sense to continue to drive around if we could use the Metro so that made a big difference in commuting. I think the last five years that I spent in the Federal Government I was in Washington at the General Services Administration and I caught the Metro into town every day, back and forth. It was great, I got to read about 60 pages on a book every day and didn't have to worry about parking or parking tickets and all kinds of other things and of course I was lucky to be close to the Vienna Station and it was a nice walk about a brisk 15 minute or leisurely 18 or 19 minute walk from here and that was fantastic because you got a little bit of exercise.

Even though I thought that Metro was a little bit expensive the Federal Government really didn't kick in until near the end of my career with any kind of support for Federal Employees getting the Metro. The set up was there because the parking around the various buildings downtown was very expensive. Now I imagine it is even more important with the price of gas and of course there just wasn't any on the street parking in Washington because you got a ticket almost anytime you went a few minutes over, but that was one of the biggest things.

One of the things I have always told people who consider moving to this area, like my daughter is getting ready to come back and I have to remind her and everybody else that you have to pay attention to the traffic situation. This isn't Washington and Northern Virginia is not an area you can ignore or treat it casually, it has to be a factor in your life, you have to factor in the time of day you go places, the way you travel and one of the biggest problems that I see is that I don't see is the fact that the surface public transportation system is not organized or set up well enough to really serve the community well as far as an alternative to driving. I really believe that there are too many areas that you can't reach easily simply by going out and catching a Metro bus of some kind. The community buses seem to be doing good - but they are not interconnected.

And the big connecting system the Metro Bus system is just inadequate. I will go for a walk some days and I will see someone standing out there getting ready to get on a Metro Bus to go somewhere at our little bus stop out here and I will walk ½ hour up the road and back and they will still be waiting for the bus sometimes. That is just not good.

I have actually been in some areas way out in Western Fairfax County and Eastern Loudon County where if you didn't have a car you weren't going to get out there and there were a lot of jobs available out there out beyond the Dulles area. So the traffic is a big 10,000-pound gorilla in the room here or in any discussion of quality of life in Fairfax County.

The kids who go to school, colleges, George Mason University is still even today primarily a commuter school and most of the students there live off campus and have to get back and forth and parking on campus, like a lot of urban schools it is not non existent but it is very, very tough and it was the biggest complain the eight years I served on the Board there and probably still have a lot of complaints about parking. So fortunately, like I said the Cue Bus system is very good and a lot of the students take advantage of that and they have to but that is probably the biggest environmental concern I think that we have in Fairfax County. I don't know what we are going to do to be able to do to correct it any time soon. That is something you are gong to have to deal with on as an individual bill and plan your life around it.

Linda: With your experience at George Mason talk about that and the changes in the University since I guess it started in the 1960's.

Joe: Yes, when I was in graduate student there were just a few little buildings in the quadrangle. Now George Mason is the largest school in the State of Virginia with three and a fourth campus developing now a tremendous amount of property with almost 800 acres compared to Maryland University with over 300 acres of land. The student population when I got to George Mason I remember coming from the University of Maryland and Howard University, they had a very diverse population but when I went to George Mason it seemed to be a very, very, very not

diverse population mostly white students and a very few African American students when I was going there. Today it is probably arguably the most diverse student population in the country.

The largest minority population here right now is the Asian students but you have a large African American and Hispanic student body there. That was really the biggest change I had seen and the change in the University's offerings. It was always right from the very beginning a different kind of University, it did not have a lot of traditional old University programs but it had by necessity developed a lot of the newer kind of programs in computers and computer science and that kind of engineering in lieu of the old civil engineering, mechanical engineering and standard programs.

Linda: I was over at their History and new Media Center recently and what an exciting place.

Joe: It is tremendous. I don't get over to George Mason too often maybe a few times a year now but every once in a while whenever I am invited to go and see something new that is happening it just blows my mind. The things they are doing in Prince William County and the new teaching units that are being developed, the engineering schools and the new programs and the Center for the Arts was finished on my watch. The Patriot Center was done just before I got on the Board there and now I understand they are developing a strong program for a second Center for the Arts there.

Ernestine: What about the Johnson's Center?

Joe: The Johnson's Center was, really the Universities centers were just becoming a concept around the... Barton schools in the country developing more university centers for the students and faculty get together in one place to study and use the library and eat together and mix together outside of the classroom. So it sorts of forced the community to socialize together and to walk around and talk to with other so they built the University Center which was named after George Johnson. Again, that was on my watch too and I am very proud of that one.

Linda: What years were you there then?

Joe: 1986 to 1994.

Linda: They were very formative years.

Joe: Very formative and challenging years budget wise the university constantly had to struggle with a very inadequate budget but in a way that was something good came out of that. The university learned how to live frugally and efficiently and under George Johnson it developed a lot of innovative and very creative ways to build a university that is useful.

Over 90% of the George Mason students work more than 20 hours a week. Most of the students of a typical student at George Mason is a little older and has to commute back and forth and had at least a part time job and many of them had families and they mostly took programs at George Mason in which they were actually able to work in those fields while they were still in the school. So for the most part the typical George Mason University student hit the ground running as soon as they got their degree and probably had been working as an intern or something like that in the accounting office or engineering company or whatever that they were working in while they were in grad school going to school at Mason so when they graduated the transition was almost seamless for a lot of those students.

The other situation was a very good working relationship in the early days with the community college system. Generally Fairfax County is lucky to have not only I consider an excellent academic full scale University but it has one of if not the best community colleges in the country. It was always back and forth if it was the larger than Miami Dade or Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) but quality wise I don't think that NOVA took a back seat to any other community college in the country and George Mason unlike a lot of other community college university relationships in the early days took the credit hours from NOVA 100% towards your degree at George Mason so if you earned 110 hours in a program at NOVA when I was on the Board anyway you actually got those 110 credit hours towards your four year degree. It was fantastic.

Linda: And NOVA stands for?

Joe: Northern Virginia Community College. They have several campuses around Fairfax County in Northern Virginia. There are 16 public universities and colleges in the State of Virginia and each one of those colleges has an independent board and I didn't know when I first heard the phrase I wasn't sure what a Board of Visitors was.

The Visitor is basically what a lot of higher education systems call Trustees or Board of Regents and independent Boards unlike California, which is the State Wide Board of New York which has a State Wide Board, Maryland has a State Wide Board. Each university or public university college has it's own independent Board that is expected to represent and to look after the fiduciary's responsibilities and look after the needs of that particular school and I personally think it works really well because you don't have a state system dictating policy to your particular school which might put your school in a disadvantage to a more well represented politically university.

Of course George Mason did need that kind of strong local support and that is why it was able to grow like it did because I believe it did have an independent Board. We had 16 Board members and the Chairman of the Board of Visitors was called a Rector, which is a very spiritual sounding job, but basically a Rector equals the Chairman of the Board and I sat my last year on the Board in 1994 I served as the Rector at George Mason. So there was a tremendous change in the diversity of the student population and lots of creative use of academic programs and we continually were thinking about them and changing them.

Linda: What about Nobel Prize Winners teaching there?

Joe: Yes, but none of them were home grown at George Mason, they moved but then George Mason makes a fair argument that they moved to George Mason because they saw the chance for intellectual and academic growth of freedom there. It is a little interesting to Arizona and Virginia Tech that they moved there just before they received their Nobel Prize. Be reassured it was an accident we did not go out and steal anybody's Nobel Prize winner program.

It happened all the way through George Mason, George Johnson use to joke all the time when all of these first high level University High Session Ivy League Schools saw him coming they would hide their faculty. Because, he did bring some great programs here, such innovative programs to the Law School, Engineering School and I think it has really been a tremendous boom to the economy here in Northern Virginia having that University develop like it did because I think that a lot of the reasons why a lot of the companies brought their companies here were because their employees were able to find graduate programs and not have to go all the way to Charlottesville or Blacksburg or even look into Washington, D.C., to get a Master's Degree in various programs.

Linda: I noticed today with computers you can Google people and your volunteer work between the two of you - talk a little about some of the things both of you have done.

Ernestine: In my case it was mostly wrapped around the Child Care Advisory Council. I felt that I was using my skills because I taught in D.C., public schools from 1971 until I retired in 1995 and then I moved out here. I had a sense of what to look for in Head Start and I enjoyed going to visit Day Care Centers because we do subsidize some parents because they needed the additional money as well as the SACCS.

The other thing I was a part of it happening and I can say I was directly involved in that was in the office we would just post the names of the [children] who offered child care but after there had been some problems we actually passed some rules in kind of requiring folks register and that meant if you registered your house was going to be inspected. Therefore we know you were offering a safe environment for our children, so some things did happen with that while I was sitting on the Board so there was a push. What is fascinating to me now is that I see the Early Child Fairfax Future Program is so wonderful that they realized how important early childhood is. When I came in it was the idea and you did think that Day Care was a safe place and if it was safe that it was alright.

But, there is so much learning that needs to go on. The young minds are so ready to go on and learn and there just seems to be so much more understanding of that now which I think is just wonderful.

To see the Fairfax future where you have private industry, and I have to say we opened a savings account at P&C Bank because I was so impressed at their involvement with early childhood. Here you have a banking institute that seems to be understanding that down the road what happens at an early level will make a big difference later on.

So to see that you have private industry and the county government involved and all coming together with educators to say there are some programs we want to make sure are offered here; and acknowledging the importance of Day Care Centers and importance of our SACC Program. So a lot of my volunteering included the ability to go see and visit. And particularly spend my summers which were supposedly to be free - I spent a lot of time visiting Day Care Centers and visiting SACC centers and seeing what was happening.

Linda: Tell me what SACCs is.

Ernestine: School Age Child Care. One of the wonderful things that Fairfax County offers is SACCs the School Age Child Care is actually in the school so a parent can sign up when their child attends a public school, and most of our elementary schools do have SACCs in them so the parent would know that if she needed before or after school care for her child she could get it right there at the school. But I have to say, it is not cheap, it has to be self supporting which means what you do pay for your child to attend that program and since we yet do not have full day time Kindergarten in all of our schools in many cases the kids that would be in afternoon Kindergarten would come in the morning for SACCs and they would stay in that program until it was time to go to their Kindergarten class. Then they could go to their Kindergarten class and return to the SACCs center. And for the students who had morning Kindergarten and then when it as time, they would go to SACCs in the morning and then go to the Kindergarten class and then return to the program in the afternoon. So it is a wonderful opportunity for parents who have to go to work to drop their child off early

and know their child will be there until 6:00 pm when they have to pick them up and the child will still be able to go to class and then go back to the center. So I think that is just fantastic and I understand why it needs to be self-supporting.

One of the other things that was great is that as they were building schools there was an agreement that when an elementary school was built SACC classrooms would be built on it. That is one of the things that Lilyan Spero was a big part of when she was a Providence Representative and on the Child Care Advisory Council, Lilyan was very involved in helping get SACC set into the school system. So I am glad that the Office for Children has won some awards because of that because other school systems have tried to copy what we have done here and hopefully it will stay strong; and, it will continue to offer the truly wonderful School Age Child Care Program. Day care is fantastic but having SAAC's right in the school is just truly wonderful.

Linda: So they have to be kindergarten age in order to?

Ernestine: SACC goes all the way through elementary and in some cases they tried to set it up for middle school but there was more difficulty with those students. But it does go all the way through elementary school because parents need child care; so from Kindergarten all the way through sixth grade that child will be able to attend the SACCs program. Now for the sixth grader there are only a couple depending on the needs of the parents they may only be there for an hour in the morning then after school they may be there from 3:30 until 6:00 so there is a longer after school program.

But the thing that is also wonderful about SACC is that it is similar to having a curriculum, it has themes and students do their homework but they also work on projects. These are educated people; I believe the teachers have degrees so there is tremendous learning that does go on so it is not just coming to play but coming to learn. So it is a continuation of learning just as learning happens during the school hours it also happens during the School Age Child Care Sessions.

Ernestine: I got tremendous enjoyment when, my children were young when we moved but they weren't still in need for child care but it was still wonderful to know that for other young families who move here that for them the school age child care was an option particularly because having half day Kindergarten is an ongoing problem.

The majority of the parents want their children to have full day Kindergarten so hopefully that is an issue that will be to be resolved. When I was on the Board (Fairfax County School Board) we were working in that direction and I know the School Board is continuing to work in that direction to try for full day Kindergarten in every elementary school. So the SACCs program will be a shorter day but it is still going to be needed in the early morning and in the afternoon programs for kids.

In my case it was kind of as a member of the Child Care Advisory Counsel being sure you paid attention because subsidized childcare is a need and even though parents were working that did not mean they did not need help.

To parents, childcare is a big expense. I think for many parents that after they talk about the mortgage I think the next expense is childcare. Some families are blessed and some families choose not to work, but for many families they don't have that option they have to go to work so the amount they pay takes a lot out of their budget so they need that subsidy. So that is another ongoing issue getting help with the state sometimes and also with the county to come up with a subsidy so parents who qualify can apply and get some help paying for their child care bills.

Again that was another thing that as a member of the Board the Office for Children was over that as well so we had to have some knowledge of how that happens and continue to lobby for it. So that was something I was aware of. An understanding of how if you can work your hardest and still be struggling; particularly for a single parent who has to work to support her child and is still struggling because her little paycheck has to pay for rent and mortgage and yet she still has to pay for child care as well as buy food and things. So that is something we had, so that was something else we were aware of.

As I mentioned childcare wasn't cheap and one of the reasons for that was the concern of competing with regular day care or private day cares and not having an unfair advantage. So there was an understanding in order to make it fair we had to make sure it was paying for itself. Parents primarily were paying for the staff that worked there they were not paying for rent because there was an understanding when those schools were being build that there would be rooms provided. But they did have to pay for the staff that worked there as well as any equipment and all of that kind of stuff. So it was self-supporting and after saying it was self supporting it also meant it wasn't cheap so there was some concern.

Linda: So this advisory committee is called the Child Care Advisory Committee?

Ernestine: The Child Care Advisory Council and that was one of the main things in the school system, and I should also say that in terms of the school system that one of the first things and this is way back when Jim Scott was the Supervisor I believe, he appointed me. I was then on the Minority Student Achievement, that was one of the first roles I served on in the school system. I am trying to think what else I served on, I had also at one point gotten involved with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and I was Vice President of NAACP for a year, not a very long time and that was partly because I was also on the Fairfax County Democratic Committee as a member for many years. I chaired the Minority Student Committee for SCDC and also for six years I was the Providence District Democratic Committee Chair so I served in that capacity. Lets see what else I did, I also served a while for one of the Superintendents and I had the opportunity twice to be campaign manager and one of the other things I did when my children, you know every parent ends up volunteering, so when my children went to Oakton High School I was on the Oakton High School Band Boosters and I did the exciting things like selling fruit, wrapping paper and all those kinds of jobs. But it was also fun because one point and I think it was one of the big sisters of one of the students was just starting an exercise program so her mother talked her into trying it out with the parents so it was really fun going over to Oakton

High School and in addition to our Band Booster meetings we were doing this exercise stuff. I learned a lot, because first of all you have to learn to work with others but you also have a better understanding of what is happening at the schools. When you are volunteering you get a sense of, like with Oakton High School which has done some renovation so it has improved since my children were there. When my children were there I did think actually I knew it was a good school and it seems like now it has continued and I hope it always does continue to be a very good school but that was one of the things I really enjoyed. It is funny how some times you would call a parent and they would say I can't help, I work and you get to say you know so do I.

One of the things that helped me out was when we first moved here and the Vienna Metro wasn't here, then the Metro finished and in my case I was still driving 45 minutes into D.C., because I found when I got off the metro by the time I waited for the bus to come and take me to the school, it wasn't working. I believe in the last three years there was finally a train station five blocks from where I worked in D.C., so my last few years of working instead of driving 45 minutes, especially if something happened at Woodrow Wilson Bridge I have had times when it was 1 ½ hours and you are so exhausted by the time you get to work you are not really able to do a good job and that was just horrendous. Plus the other concern of course was when it snowed. I had times when it snowed and it took me almost three hours to get home due to driving in the snow. So one of the things I definitely did if it snowed, I took the Metro because the Metro was safer in dealing with the snow than driving was so that helped me in my battles of getting to work because I worked over 20 years of commuting in the District. But the other thing that I did was once the Metro came in is I could steadily prepare for the day and on the way in I could do writing or whatever and coming back particularly once I got on the Orange Line I was at the end of the line and there was a large group of us that would sit there and nod so I think I squeezed in a 20 minute nap and that always helped me so when I got home I was refreshed and I then could handle going to meetings in the evenings so that was kind of an ongoing thing. It made a big difference in your day to come home by train because heaven forbid if there was an accident because you had to come back and forth across the Woodrow Wilson Bridge so traffic was quite a challenge.

Linda: What schools in D.C., were you working?

Ernestine: I worked at Verney Elementary School, Van Ness Elementary School, I primarily worked in Anacostia but toward the last couple of years when I was in Van Ness, it actually is very close to where the stadium is now and it was South East Washington but it was right across from the Washington Navy Yard so I worked at that school for the last couple of years and enjoyed it. One of the major differences that I use to see as someone who traveled and when you are teaching at Head Start you are usually going into difficult neighborhoods and security was an issue and I remember living in Fairfax County we take security for granted and you feel safe here, in D.C., I was working in neighborhoods and I don't know if you remember but there was a time period where there were some weirdos who were shooting into apartments. I taught at some schools like Malcolm X Elementary where the parents were having to put their children on the floors to sleep because they had to worry about people shooting into their apartments. I even had some experiences, I was lucky a couple of times but one time I was having a birthday party at school and I was suppose to stop by this woman's house to pick up supplies and I was running late and I called her to say I couldn't get there and the police answered the phone and so there were some experiences like that. So I knew that living in Virginia in addition to the good school system you were better over here because it doesn't face all the challenges those kids were facing. For instance, catching the train one of the things I knew was not to wait until it got dark. I knew to be on the train so that when it was dark I was headed home because being in the district in the evening things happened, even though there were bans on guns there would always seemed to be someone who would be shooting off randomly. So, safety was an issue in D.C., but not in the county like once you got out here you felt safer once you were in Fairfax, but being in the district I was very aware driving or walking.

Joseph: One of the things we have right here in our community is we have 130 homes here and I served on the Community Association Board for a couple of years. We learned from the police and we have a very good relationship with the police coming out of Sully District and they have told

us time and time again that this area is one of the more densely populated areas in Fairfax county and at the same time one of the safest areas in Fairfax County which is a statistic that usually doesn't go together, higher density and physical property safety that we have here. So it is so safe here that at times it is hard to justify things like extra lighting from the State.

We have an excellent relationship with the police department, they patrol the area on bicycles and I understand exactly what Ernestine is saying it just feels good especially as a parent to know that your kids can walk home from school and be safe almost all the time as compared to some areas of the country. Like you said you always wonder how the kids are or you are going to make it as far as physical safety and property safety.

Linda: What do you think we can attribute that too, here in Fairfax County that safe feeling? I don't think we have more police here than in other places.

Joseph: I think in general the people who live in Fairfax County and Providence and around here have a different idea, maybe because of where they grew up and maybe have a higher education, I don't know what it is but have a different relationship with the Fairfax County Police Department and the Sheriff's Department than you will see in different places, but there is a lot more trust between the community and the police. That trust allows the police to do a much better job in policing. They very strongly, in the few years that I served on the Community Association Board were very, very strong in encouraging our residents here and I am sure all around the county to contact them for anything that concerned them. I have lived in places where you just did not call the police for a lot of things. Whereas people in Fairfax County would just pick up the phone and call the police and say you know there is somebody walking through our neighborhood or something happened, or even if something happened to their cars like a break in. The trust between the police and the community is realized where the police are actually there to protect and serve you is true. In a lot of places that was a cliché and never really happened but it seems to happen here in Fairfax County. So I think it is the relationships between the police and the community and the police do things is this community that people know about. The police have a small program in Fairfax County

where they track people that have Dementia and Alzheimer's with electronic devices, it is part of the technology where it allows people to be more secure with their older adult parents, or whoever that have these problems whereby they can quickly be located if they wander off. It is those kinds of programs that the police are actually able to get involved in the community really appreciates this.

Neighborhood Watch is another program that is taken very, very, seriously in Fairfax County. Neighborhood Watch really do watch and call the police and they are even making better inroads in getting people who have problems with English and with those who don't speak English very well in trusting the police. That was an issue at one point in time where the people who did not speak English very well were reluctant to call the police; at least in Fairfax County I don't know about a lot of the other counties showing a lot hostility towards our immigrants but at least in Fairfax County the relationship between the police and our residents seems to be the biggest reason why I believe this county is safer.

Ernestine: Yes, it also reminds me of the Officer's School System Program because I remember Officer Friendly at Marshall High School also worked with the Middle schools and he talked about students sharing with him. I also remember where a student was killed at Marshall High School and I didn't realize once we got to the interviews that the student and we do have problems with gangs unfortunately in Fairfax County which also occurs in some neighborhoods more than others. But apparently this was a student who had gotten involved with and had a problem with another student and the older brother came after this young man and this young man didn't even go to Marshall High School but he remembered Officer Friendly who worked there and the young man was trying to get away and he was looking for safety at Marshall High School to look for Officer Friendly. When he got out of the car to go into the door, he got shot. What was also so sad was the Officer wasn't there that day. He was so upset by that because this young man was coming to look for him and what the police did when they finally tracked the guy down Officer Friendly was invited to be part of that so he watched when they caught the young man. But it said something about how highly and how much trust there was when that Officer was not seen as the enemy. He was seen as a friend. I

am saying Officer Friendly but I mean a school resource officer but they were seen as someone one could trust when he got in trouble he was having his friend drive him over there. I think the assumption was that there was a fight inside of Marshall High School but this was actually a student I believe may have been from Pimman High School or somewhere but he was going to Marshall High School to get to that School Resource Officer because he knew he would help him and I think that says a lot too because we need them in the schools. Fairfax isn't perfect but there are a lot of ongoing efforts being made whether it is programs for young people after school so they have something to do so that the rec programs that go on can invite the kids and say here is a safe place for them to come and something for you to do, so I do think the county does make efforts in that way. I don't know if the School Resource Officer is still at Marshall High School, but he was definitely highly thought of and with his efforts at the high school level and also at the middle school level where the students would share with him anything the gangs might be doing. I know the school system and we took gang activity seriously we kind of had too. Those folks were scary because they had no problem walking into a school. I know of a situation where we had students where if this gang was going after the other gang they would actually come into the school to get the students so they could come out and participate in this gang fight and it blew my mind that they would have the nerve to go into a public school and pull a student out and say come on we need you to go here. So, we had to take that very seriously and put them out because they could not be in that neighborhood school and we would send them somewhere else. The school system made strong efforts to try to do all they can could contain the gang activities and that is an ongoing problem, so it is safe but it is not perfect the county does have its problems too.

Linda: Before we conclude is there anything else you would like to add to future residents of Providence District, Fairfax County?

Joseph: Well I guess I really need as the Providence District Representative on the County Commission on Aging, I do need to say something about that. We are very much involved in a project that the Board of Supervisors have begun called the 50 Plus Program and we are monitoring certain initiatives that the Board of Supervisors have identified as something they

have wanted to track based on the tremendous and expected increase in the over 50 population in the county and the resources they are going to have to provide very soon to that population. So we have divided it up into a number of areas such as care giving and one of the members of the Commission is tracking that with the Area Agency on Aging staff. I have been assigned the technology and it works out real well because Supervisor Smyth has had the technology part of the 50 Plus Program that she worked with and has had committee meetings and has designed and discussed the initiatives and we have our first report that is due to the Board of Supervisors this summer in July and we are preparing it and are in the process and have drafts of those reports of the various initiatives that the Supervisor's said they wanted. It has been a really good experience for me being on the Commission on Aging. I never expected to do that; I replaced a friend of mine who asked me to step in because she wasn't able to do it and I have been reappointed by Supervisor Smyth as full term now. Fairfax County is one of the few places I believe in the country that is really paying very, very special attention to the needs of seniors.

I went to a recognition luncheon just yesterday for the volunteers in the Meals on Wheels Program, which is part of the Area on Aging Program, and to hear that there are 1,400 volunteers for Meals on Wheels including we had at least ½ dozen people they gave recognition to yesterday that had actually been working with Meals on Wheels Program for more than 20 years, one 27 years one over 30 years. Can you imagine volunteering for a program like that for that length of time?

I talked to my son who is in Philadelphia and I told him that it is just amazing that there is that amount of volunteers in Fairfax County; the people just donate their time freely and in tremendous amounts. My son said that is Northern Virginia, you don't expect to see that when you go to other places. It is not here where I live but that is just the way people seem to be in Northern Virginia and Fairfax County. People just have a different attitude about growing older and what they are going to do.

I was joking that you don't see a whole lot of shuffle board courts around the county. People are in life long programs and are volunteering for everything that you can think of. Such as driving for Meals on Wheels and

providing transportation services, these are all volunteers and they really feel that it is just a natural part of their life and it is just what you are suppose to do and that is another reason why you have a really good feeling about the community when you are here. They really want to get involved with the things with what the government is involved with and they pay attention to that, they watch and that helps the School Board and the Board of Supervisors do their work when they have a school with a standing room only for PTA meetings, which is amazing.

I have been to other places at PTA meetings where you find only two or three people that attend so of course they are struggling. When you come to this community and you go to a PTA meeting and there are not enough chairs or enough time so it is great and it works out.

The Board of Supervisor's had a meeting at the government building on reinventing your neighborhood a few weeks ago where we invited people from Boston and a few other various places around the country who are now forming this new idea of setting up their neighborhood with technology with community support so people can grow older and old in their homes and getting rid of the need of the necessity of going to a nursing home or a care center of some kind.

If you have the resources coming in and some people and the older adults in that community get together and pool their resources and hire support services more people will simply just be able to grow older in your home. It was packed, the Government Center main auditorium was actually filled to capacity and it was unbelievable. The Governor was suppose to be there so that was a matter of help in getting a lot of people to come, but he did not show up and sent a representative who I think her eyes were just wide opened when she came in there thinking that you people do actually show up at these kinds of things, yep we do. Community involvement is just tremendous.

Ernestine: Also this is a knowledgeable well-educated community. One of the things that I learned as a school board member is that when the parents came up with information, you better check it out because I use to think they had more time to sit on their computers than the school staff did

because there were a couple of times where they were right and the school staff was wrong.

So I learned that if the parents came up with something you better check it out because they usually knew what they were talking about and one of the issues in terms of changing school boundaries oh!!

Changing school boundaries is a very, very serious issue and parents care a lot about where their kids go to school and when you talk about making a change it is not something that you can do lightly. We ended up having facilitators and breaking thing the meetings down because we found we had to do that because we had to make sure we gave them every opportunity to get involved and after we had the meeting we put it on the internet so they could actually look, parents who could not make the meetings could look at the notes from the meeting. So we did a lot to make sure that when a change was made everybody had an opportunity for involvement.

I guess one of the first times I realized that parents could be right was when we were opening the new Kilmer Middle School and putting the Gifted and Talented (GT Center) in that because Kilmer because was one of the smallest middle schools in the county and when we added the GT Center it made sense and Longfellow Middle School had a Gifted and Talented Center that was hugely overcrowded so there was a need to open a new center and Kilmer was under enrolled so there was a need to put it there, but boy was it difficult.

The folks who were already in Longfellow wanted to stay there because it was an outstanding program and one of the things we talked about doing, I think it was Frost Middle School because many of the Providence kids went to Frost and that Talented and Gifted Center, I don't know if it was full but I think it was fairly full, but the staff recommended pulling some students out of Frost and sending them to Kilmer and the parents had a fit.

One of the things that the parents said was if you do this it will really bring our program down and we will lose too many students and I thought wait a minute, but when you start looking into it they had a point. They really

knew what they were taking about because we would have been pulling out maybe ¼ or something, it was a large number if those students so they were right and it would have had a tremendous impact on Frost and it was one of the times I realized that parents, we have educated parents and they do know what they are talking about.

So when changes are made you have to double check on what the staff had recommended and make sure the parents were valid with their concerns. After we went back and told them we double-checked and they weren't right that could be a problem because then they are wait a minute are you sure. I have been surprised at how many times they are right so I learned when those parents spoke you listened.

One of the reasons we have a good school system in Fairfax County is because parents care about education here. Even if they don't have kids in school here, they still care. Number one reason is because they know that the future generation has to be educated so the younger people can take care of us older folks. Part two is they know the cost of housing and the value of their house has something to do with the school system because it is amazing how much you hear. I remember having man tell me I am from Iran and we knew about you in Iran and I thought Whoa!

It is just the idea that all around the world they hear about us and keep coming for our schools and again the many people that are coming here many are well educated even though they may struggle with English they still are educated folks and they want to make sure their children have a good education.

With the immigrants I saw my experience was that they cared I will say that in terms of PTA meetings, they are not comfortable and it is a struggle getting the minority parents coming to the meetings. Sometimes it is just simple, we had school board diversity training and we learned some basic things like when you invite people to coffees many of our parents are coming from countries that serve tea, that is such a little thing but those little things could very important.

So we really have an ongoing challenge making a mix and in many schools it does very well. I was a retired teacher but I developed a great deal of respect for a Principal who are important folks for the success of schools, if you have a successful school you have a great Principal so I have really developed respect for the Principals we have in the county and how hard they work including evenings and weekends and getting involved in their communities so I think that is another part of why we have good schools.

Joseph: The Board on the committee we started to raise scholarship money for the minority's business owners, one of the things that we did was getting involved with mentoring students in the public school system K through 12. These business owners periodically one or two of them would go to the elementary schools and track the elementary school Principal or middle school Principal for the day, just hang out with them and invariably that CEO or President of that company would come back to our board meeting and say that I thought that I worked hard and said that he could not keep up with that Principal and wondered how they did that day in and day out and said it was amazing that the amount of energy and effort that was required to run an elementary school compared to running my 60 million dollar or 100 million dollar a year business. It was fantastic.

Linda: One of the things I want to mention and I am not sure that this is not coming through because this is an audio and not a visual Ernestine is your passion for education. When you start talking about it, you light up. It is obviously a life long passion with you, both of you actually. Is there anything else before we close?

Joseph: We could go on forever.

Linda: This has been very interesting for me and I have learned a lot from this interview, I appreciate it and I thank you very much.